
TIME MANAGEMENT

Other Handouts:

- Getting Organised

To study effectively at university it is important to manage your time well and to plan for success. Good time management involves knowing yourself well, knowing what are your 'time wasters' and what are your priorities and then minimizing the former and working towards your goals.

Step 1: Gather your Tools

Gather the tools you will need to plan your time efficiently. These are

- a diary (paper or electronic)
- a Murdoch University Principal dates wall calendar (buy from bookshop)
- a 12 week semester planner
- a weekly timetable to mark in your scheduled classes (lectures /workshops/tutorials/laboratories)

Step 2: Identify Priorities

- Go through each of your unit guides and make a list of when each piece of assessment is due.
- On your semester wall chart write down all your assessments on the day they are due.
- Use a different coloured pen for each unit.

Tip!

Check to see if some of the assignments are due on the same day or in the same week. Or if there are some weeks where you have nothing due and other weeks where everything seems due.

Step 3: Backward Planning

Backward planning is useful as it will allow you to spread your work load over the semester and avoid last minute panics.

To successfully hand in your assessments on the due date you will need to have accomplished a number of tasks. Backward planning means you can work out:

- what are the tasks involved?
- how long will each of them take?
- when do you need to do each task?

What are the tasks involved?

For example, for an assignment that asks you to write 2000 words on:

'What are the impediments to Australia reducing its greenhouse gas emissions?'

You would need to:

1. Analyse the essay question
2. Research the topic
3. Read the articles you have gathered
4. Write the first draft
5. Revise and rework the draft into a well structured complete essay
6. Edit and proofread, checking all your references have been included, and then
7. Submit the essay on due date

Tip!

Look at your list of due assignments and try brainstorming a list of the tasks involved for each of them.

How long will each of them take?

Each student works at a different pace so it is essential that you work out how long each task will take **you**.

Below is a possible outline of how long each task may take in writing a 2000 word essay, as a backward plan (in reverse order).

Task	Time
7	30 mins
6	2 hours
5	6 hours
4	9 hours
3	20 hours
2	8 hours
1	3 hours
Total	48.5 hr

Tip!

Give the most time to reading as this is the most important and often most difficult task.

Remember, you don't have to do each task all in one go. In fact, it is far better to allow time to reflect between tasks, especially between tasks 4 & 5.

When will I do it?

Backward plan by starting with the final product, moving backwards in time and putting in your diary when you are going to accomplish each task.

Below is an example for writing a 2000 word essay.

Step	Actions to do	When to start	How long it might take
7	Print off final copy ready to hand in.	day before it is due in.	30 mins
6	Proofread and check all your references have been included.	two days before due date.	2 hours
5	Revise the draft of the essay.	five days before due date.	6 hours spread over three days
4	Write the first draft of the essay.	two weeks before due date.	9 hours spread over three days
3	Read the articles you have gathered as well as re-reading relevant articles from the unit reader.	four weeks before due date.	20 hours spread over eight days
2	Research the topic by using all the resources in the Library such as the Murdoch catalogue, the data bases and following up relevant articles that have been pointed out to you in your study guide.	five weeks before due date.	8 hours spread over two days
1	Analyse the essay question by brainstorming, mind-mapping and defining terms. Consider the context of the question within the learning objectives set out in your unit study guide. (Refer to the Tip sheet on analysing essay questions on the Student Learning website to get started on this task.)	six weeks before due date.	3 hours in one go

Tip!

To overcome procrastination, try to do a little work on your assignment each day even if it is only ten minutes!

Step 4: Draft a study schedule

Mark in the 12 week semester planner your class times for each week, add in travel times, paid work commitments and assign recreational and /or family times. With the time that is left allocate enough study hours to make up 10 hours per week per unit (this includes time spent in lectures, tutorials and labs)

Step 5: Take control of your time and minimize 'time wasters'

Students often work out study schedules and timetables for assignments but then suddenly all the time seems to have gone and not enough was done!

Do you know where your time goes?

To stay in control of your time spend a week keeping track of all the things that you do. At the end of each day mark in a notebook all your different activities, include the essential ones of sleeping and eating! At the end of a week add up the hours to assess if you are spending sufficient time on your study. See Marshall (2006), pp 42-48, for useful worksheets.

Activities	Hours spent per week
Sleeping	
Cooking/Eating	
Studying	
Watching TV	
Non-study use of computer	
Attending classes at university	
Working in the paid workforce	
Family commitments	
Socialising with friends	
Travelling between home/work/university	
Other	
Total	

Tip!

There are 168 hours in a week and successful full-time study at university (including attendance at classes) takes up at least 40 hours.

Step 6: Adjust your study schedule

After assessing where your time goes and what your priorities are go back over your study schedule and make sure it allows enough time for all aspects of your life. Balance between study, paid work, family commitments and recreation is essential as a degree takes at least three years and you want to plan for that, not just to make it through the next few weeks.

Review and adjust your study schedule regularly as your priorities will change.

Tip!

Sunday evenings may be a useful time to spend half an hour planning your week ahead and making sure your study schedule meets the priorities for the coming week. Make a note of this in your diary as a 'to do' task for each Sunday.

Step 7: Allocate time in your diary

Refer to your weekly schedule of classes you have to attend and then in your diary allocate a specific time on a specific day to do each of the tasks that you identified in the backward planning exercise. Write the specific task that you need to do in the diary rather than just 'study'. Use your diary to have a list of 'to do' tasks for each day. Mark the tasks off as they are completed and move unfinished jobs to the next day.

Tip!

Be realistic about the times that you choose to do your university work. Don't try to study when you are tired. See the Getting Organised handout for assistance.

Reference:

Marshall, L. (2006) *A Learning Companion: your guide to independent learning*. Sydney: Pearson Education.